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STATEMENT ON CONDITION OF RAMMED EARTH HOUSES

- May 1940 -

Seven houses of rammed earth were built in 1936 on the Mt. Olive Homestead project of the Farm Security Administration located near Birmingham, Alabama. Six of these houses were occupied in 1937 and the seventh in 1938. The following is a brief report of their physical condition in May 1940.

In general, the rammed earth houses have provided very satisfactory living quarters. They have proved to be several degrees cooler in summer than brick or frame houses located in the same community. The rammed earth houses are also warmer in winter and require less fuel to heat. The families now living in the rammed earth homes state that they are well pleased with the houses and would not exchange them for either brick or frame construction. There has been, however, some minor maintenance expense.

1. Exterior Walls: The walls of one of the rammed earth houses were stuccoed and show no signs of weathering. The walls of the other six units have received no treatment other than paint but show very slight effects from the weather. In three places where the earth walls had been erected without a concrete footing, moisture penetrated for about one foot up the wall, causing the interior paint to peel off. This condition was remedied by replacing about one foot of bottom of wall with concrete.

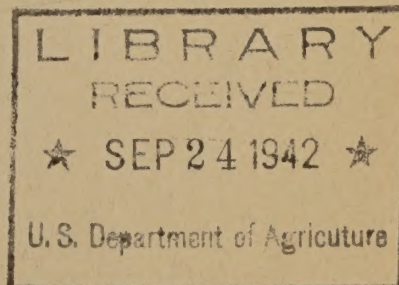
2. Roofs: Several minor cracks appeared in the roofs which were easily repaired with tar.

3. Floors: Most floors are in good condition. Some tile floors are slightly damaged due to tile breaking or cracking.

4. French Doors: The French doors have proved unsatisfactory, especially where they are not protected by a porch. These doors tend to swell or expand during wet weather. They also warp. In some cases the putty has given way, permitting rain to work in around the glass. Rain also drives in at the top and bottom of some of the doors. The doors have been adjusted, and old putty has been removed and replaced with a mixture of putty, white lead, and whiting. Ventilators have also been added to the doors in order to obtain and control ventilation.

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